



DR GRISHA A. SKLOVSKY, AM, FRACI  
(1915-1995)

Dr Grigorig Abramovitch Sklovsky, a former President of the Royal Society of Victoria, died suddenly on 9 January 1995. In view of his many contributions to the nation, and particularly to Victorian science and technology, the Council of the Society has arranged for the publication of the following tributes which were paid to Dr Sklovsky at a Memorial Service held on 18 January 1995, at the Parkview Room, Camberwell Civic Centre, Camberwell, Victoria 3124.

WILL DARVALL Welcome to the celebration of the spectacular life of Grisha Sklovsky.

I practised as Grisha's nephew from the time he arrived in Australia until his death and I practised as his doctor for twenty-five years. We shared many serious times, many intimacies and many jokes, and most of you can say exactly the same thing—because that was the incredible nature of the man, that he was interested in you, he was interested in what you thought and what you were doing and he was always humorous. The word 'life' became a quantitative word when it applied to Grisha, because who could have contributed more to family, friends, education, information industry and community than Grisha. Grigorig Abramovitch Sklovsky was born on the 6th October 1915 and died on the 9th January 1995, quietly and peacefully and unexpectedly in his sleep in his eightieth year. Today we have ten speakers.

BARBARA DARVALL (sister-in-law) I keep on reminding myself that I am among friends because I wouldn't have taken up public speaking at 83 if I wasn't the only person, probably, who knows what happened during the War when Celia and Grisha showed their extraordinary positive thinking and knew exactly what they wanted. I first heard of Grisha in 1938 when Celia wrote to me from Lyon, where she was an au pair and Grisha was doing his doctorate. She spoke of him frequently in her letters until my family began to get a little anxious, because they were so afraid that she might decide to stay there, as they had fallen in love. Grisha wanted to marry her then and there. My mother was quite ill and likely to die at any time, and they were both anxious, so Celia decided to come home and get them all around to it and Grisha was to follow shortly. Well, in the meantime, Grisha took her to meet his mother and it was very salutary to us anxious Australians to hear that Grisha's mother was a bit horrified at him taking up with anyone from such an uncivilised country (we do realise what a lot Grisha did to civilise it). Anyway, she came back and the war broke out. She was getting letters and then of course she couldn't go and then there was the fall of France and Grisha disappeared and my dad, who had been very anxious, began to get very tolerant and when I congratulated him he said 'Well I think there's practically no chance we'll ever see the poor chap, I might as well be decent about it'. After a while a letter came: Grisha had done some miraculous escape,

wriggling out through Spain. Then the letters came and Grisha was brought to England and joined the Czech legion, where he had to live under canvas for years. We were very struck when a letter came saying how wonderful it was he'd been asked out and he'd actually sat in a room for an evening. Meanwhile, Celia was working as an Orthoptist with Dr Ringland Anderson (whose grandson has just recently saved Grisha's sight last year). During that time Celia had a bad motor accident and by some telepathy Grisha wrote and said he had a feeling that she was ill and sent her a most comforting letter. When the war finally ended, we were very worried about Grisha again during the invasion, but comforted by the fact that his eyesight would prevent him from being in the front line. Finally, when the war in Europe ended, the Japanese war was still going on and Celia couldn't get to Europe and Grisha couldn't get out and Celia discovered the only way to get nearer was to join the Australian Red Cross to work in Greece, so she did the training course and went. Grisha said he'd try to get there. She had been there for several months and one night as she was filling her hottie, as she had a bad cold, she was told that there was a young man she might be interested in meeting and in came Grisha. After that they got married twice because no-one knew who had jurisdiction. However, it must have worked, as Celia lost her nationality and they had three children so they must have been properly married. They stayed in Europe for another couple of months trying to trace Grisha's mother, who had disappeared in Paris the night they heard all the Gestapo cars roaring along the street, and there were agonising rumours from people who thought they had seen her, though he was never able to find out anything. In the meantime, when we found they were definitely coming back to Australia, my husband had been doing all the legal work, trying to pull any strings to make it easier for them to get back. When they arrived they stayed with us and we all talked to him at once. He did look staggeringly foreign to us dreadfully insular Australians and his accent was so thick but he was so matey. I had four small children at that stage; he just fitted in to the muddled household and the children loved him and he was so helpful. In no time we were able to tease him when he said 'Are you thinkink of ridink this mornink?'

I was told I must tell this silly story. My husband was extremely tired, as he had been overworking for a good many years and we were

due to go on a camping trip. So after they had stayed with us for a few weeks I realised that Grisha's gratitude was leading him to be so vital, so matey and so entertaining to my poor tired husband till late at night that Pip was getting rather glad to get away. They looked after the house, as their flat wasn't ready. When we got back everything was beautifully clean and tidy—much better than I would have had it; however Pip began saying that 'Everything smells of garlic'. He had a very sensitive and a nervous digestion and he got quite horribly Australian saying 'bloody foreigners, bloody garlic!'. So I began to clean everything more and more and everything got worse and worse. Finally I found a large sliver of garlic stuck in the soap saver. I was told I must tell that story.

I think that everyone knows that my children and grandchildren absolutely adored him. Some of the grandchildren burst into tears when they heard that he had died. His interest in my children was absolutely amazing. At their sensitive years they weren't always pleased to be told 'I've been talking to your professor about you', but, as they got older, they appreciated his incredible good will and wisdom and he helped them in many ways, one most especially. Actually, Shakespeare puts things much better than I do; 'His life was gentle and the elements so mixed in him that Nature might stand up and say to all the world this was a man'.

**WILL DARVALL** Our next speaker is Sam Moshinsky who also has known Grisha for many, many years. Grisha helped to bring his family out in 1951.

**SAM MOSHINSKY** I've been asked by Celia to provide you with a picture and a snapshot of Grisha's family background and early life in Siberia and Germany. Our family's connection, that is the Moshinsky's relationship to the Sklovskys, goes back a long way. My mother's grandfather and Grisha's grandmother were brother and sister. Their family name was Aptoman. Grisha's father and our maternal grandmother were cousins. Just to set the scene, the earliest record of the Sklovsky family is at the end of the 19th Century, and even then the Aptomans and the Sklovskys, like millions of Russian Jews, lived a very miserable existence under the yoke of an anti-Semitic Czarist regime. Not only were the means by which they could earn their livelihoods circumscribed by restrictive laws, they were also restricted to where they could live. As the suffocation

of their persecution grew, the Jews sought to escape through emigration, which they did in large numbers. Most went West to the United States and England and also to Palestine to establish a Jewish state. However, a small number of Russian Jews were drawn to the East. Siberia was being economically opened up by the recent completion of the Trans-Siberian railway and the restrictions against the Jews there were less harsh on the theory, that the further you got away from the Czar in Moscow the better. The Sklovsky clan, then living in Gluchov, opted for the East and left for there at the turn of the century. Grisha's father joined his family there in 1903 upon completion of his studies. He was a born entrepreneur and became an extremely successful businessman right up to 1922, when the reach of the new Communist regime consolidated its position everywhere and began to put paid to all forms of private business activity. He was not only extremely able, but quick witted, a trait which Grisha inherited. Grisha recounts the following anecdote. In his early years of business expansion, Grisha's father wanted to establish a base in Chita, an important economic centre in Siberia, but it was still forbidden for Jews to live there. Not easily deterred, he tried a ruse by which to rent a room in a house there on the pretext of being a student. The landlady bought his story. However, during the initial interview in her parlour, she had to excuse herself and suggested to Grisha's father that he leaf through the photo album. In doing so, he noticed a face that he recognised as the local police chief, on whose list he knew he was. When the landlady returned, she noticed him looking at the photo and said 'Oh this is my favourite cousin, you'll like him, he comes here often.'. Grisha's father kept his cool, he did not bolt. He booked the room and later rang to cancel, explaining that he had been called away. In 1912 Grisha's father married his mother, a distant cousin, who was studying in Kiev. They married soon after she completed her medical studies. He then brought her to Stretensk, also in eastern Siberia, where the family was then based, and three years later Grisha was born. He would have been eighty years young in October of this year. Just before his 7th birthday Grisha recalls being called into his mother's room and shown his sister, Sofie. His notes record the following 'I loved her immediately and was the first ever to kiss her'. The Sklovsky's lived a very comfortable but active life. His father was away a lot on business, travelling up and down the Trans-Siberian rail-

way and from him Grisha inherited another attribute, helping others. His father helped a lot of people and even established a number of hospitals in nearby towns just so that his wife could maintain her medical skills. Grisha's ebullient personality came to the fore early in his childhood. He was very popular with his friends. So much so that his father once said that he had overheard Grisha's young friends say to each other, when the father entered his house, 'Oh that's the chap that is staying with Grisha'. Grisha and Sofic were blessed with wonderful parents, they were warm and frank about all things and they were determined to expose them, which they did, to a variety of cultures and a very, very liberal outlook. In 1925 when the business of Siberia wound down, the family moved to Berlin and they installed themselves in a comfortable neighbourhood. They arrived at a point of time when the then Weimar Republic was on the threshold of what was to be a great, but unfortunately, brief period of culture and freedom—for before long the dark clouds of Nazism started to appear. Grisha's first school in Berlin was a total disaster. During his first days, being new to Germany, he made an inordinately large number of mistakes in a dictation test. His teacher insisted upon administering a caning. Grisha remonstrated, saying that he could understand such punishment for matters of discipline and behaviour but not for genuine ignorance. When the teacher still would not relent, he simply got up and walked out. Despite his mother's pleadings, Grisha refused to return to the school, stating that his sense of justice would not permit him to do so. He quotes in his notes, 'This sense of justice has been a guiding principle in my life and strongly affected my attitude and decisions in all matters'. Time does not permit a more detailed account of the rest of his schooling in Berlin, where he matriculated, except to say that his next school and teachers were chosen with greater care. These were also years where he developed lifelong friendships, like Walter Juder, the Hertenbergs and the Vialkovs, with whom he corresponded right up to the end. Grisha's father in Berlin had established a successful timber business, based in Poland, but unfortunately died suddenly in 1934 in Warsaw. His mother survived him for a number of years but, as you have heard, she perished in the Holocaust. His sister Sofic died of cancer last year in Paris. Grisha witnessed the rise of Nazism and its devastating anti-Semitism. He

saw for himself the book burnings and the excesses of the storm troopers. His upbringing and experiences moulded him as a person and as a Jew. He was proud of his heritage but rejected its religiosity. He believed in integration and therefore was totally comfortable with marrying Celia and the way they brought up Anna, Michael and Janey, of whom he was so proud. But he also states in his notes that he supported the creation of the State of Israel and even admits some regrets in not being involved personally in the drama of its establishment and development. He was indeed a citizen of this world. I will leave it to others, as you have heard from Barbara, to elaborate on his later life, the move to Paris, the studies at Lyon University, where he obtained a doctorate in chemistry, his wartime army service, his marriage to Celia, and his establishment of a new and successful life full of achievement in Australia. In conclusion I would appreciate your indulgence for a few more minutes for what I feel I must recount and place for the record: a critical role in rescuing my family from Shanghai and bringing us to Melbourne. When the Chinese communists took over in 1949, my family, too, had to abandon their commercial interests in Shanghai. We were pressured to leave China but we were stateless and had nowhere to go. My mother, who like Grisha always writes to everybody and knows where everybody is, managed to obtain from an uncle of Grisha's, still living in Harbin in Manchuria, Grisha's address in Melbourne and wrote to him describing our family's plight. What we needed was for an Australian to sponsor us and to assure the Australian government that we would not be a charge upon it, upon arrival here. Grisha responded immediately and warmly and in 1951 the necessary papers were issued. It should be born in mind that all this correspondence took place in the early 1950s with the Korean war at full height, with China on one side and Australia on the other side and certainly correspondence was slow, tortuous and difficult, but it certainly took place. Then my family decided to send me at the age of seventeen to Australia on my own. Could the Sklovskys accommodate me until the rest of the family arrived. He realised that it was a great ask but the answer was again in the ready affirmative and for this I must thank Celia, specifically, for her ready concurrence as well, for I imagine by now she must have started to wonder what she was getting herself into with Grisha and his Russian relatives, whom she had never even met. My arrival in Melbourne

on Cup Day in 1951 did not spell the end of Grisha's involvement, although he and Celia had already done so much. He took one look at me and realised that he was facing a major challenge. For quite obviously my semi-Colonial upbringing in Shanghai had rendered me totally unsuitable for life in Australia. He taught me how to wield a broom, how to hand mow a lawn, to wash the dishes and to even take out the rubbish on a Sunday night. He even sent me on a 1500-mile hitch-hiking trip around Australia to get to know the country. He guided me in my studies and my career. He was a true mentor. He was not only a gifted man but a great giver as well. Our family today not only celebrates a life of achievement, we also mourn his untimely passing.

**WILL DARVALL** Kate Blaubaum (Kate Redwood) the surrogate daughter from the years when surrogacy was not fraught with all the legal problems of today.

**KATE BLAUBAUM** This is a special opportunity for me to express my thanks to the Sklovsky family, in particular Grisha and Celia, for the way in which, with enormous warm heartedness and endless generosity, they have included me in their noisy, energetic, argumentative, positive, opinionated, caring, chaotic, creative, humorous and loving family. Given half a chance I suspect that there would be a large contingent up here beside me to give a rousing thank you for such inclusion and a big cheer for Celia and Grisha. As some of you would know, I've spent quite a lot of time involved with the development of social policy and, in the last year, have given considerable thought to the issue of the year 'The International Year of the Family' which has involved the deliberation of many bureaucrats and academics who, I think, have totally forgotten to recognise a new family type. The new international elastic family—the Sklovsky family. This elastic family, which welcomed in over the years waifs and strays, refugees and visitors, friends and relations, was based on a wonderful partnership. Grisha full of energy, expansiveness, warmth, ideas and opinions. Celia, providing not only what we these days refer to as the infrastructure but the practical loving care. In the 39 years that I knew Grisha, what struck me very forcibly was the diversity of people who were drawn into Grisha's ambit and in whom he invested time and effort. The diverse kinds of assistance which he provided for them and the long term commit-

ment. Few people maintain friendships and associations with so many people over such a lengthy period of time as Grisha. Speaking for myself, Grisha and Celia took me on as a solemn and most unprepossessing six-year-old. They treated me as one of their own kids, and I can't comment on the results but I can only say that it felt good at the time. I remember in particular the annual convoy to Apollo Bay with the rituals of camping on Wild Dog Creek. 'Good God who left the ice box door open.' The catching of eels and Grisha skinning them with the pliers. The tennis on the Watkins' tennis court and the large gatherings at night and on the beach. As we grew older, Grisha's concern regarding our educational progress. The debates and arguments on issues of public concern. 'Good God you're older than I am' he'd say to us, a frequent comment to the young. Grisha providing me with my first experience of employment as a vacation student at ICI in the pre-car radio days, when we'd drive from Camberwell to Ascot Vale with the transistor radio in order not to miss the news and not to miss the share market report. Grisha providing me with a reference to get my first real job in England—it must have been a good reference to get a job from Australia. Grisha as speech maker on special occasions and I remember in particular the impromptu speech that he gave at Ron's and my wedding. Grisha's encouragement of membership in important bodies and associations as a means of developing the careers of us young adults with varying success and his particular habit of keeping copies of special papers and reports that we all must read. And more recently, Grisha as mentor and political adviser, early in the morning, 'I heard you on the radio this morning, can I give you a little advice', and you knew that any media appearance would not go unnoticed. Grisha larger than life, boundlessly generous of ideas, energy and resources. Grisha, we'll miss you dreadfully. However, the international elastic family lives on, and Grisha, what was the joke about the wheelbarrow that went ping, ping? I hope someone remembers.

**WILL DARVALL** Hans Snellerman, who shared a 40-year friendship and who is also from Europe.

**HANS SNELLERMAN** It's a great privilege to be able to say a few things about Grisha. A friendship of over 40 years. I'm also a newcomer—I don't come from Shanghai, I come

from Holland. Grisha and I and our families of course have shared many wonderful times in this period. Our association was particularly in sport. I think we all know that Grisha was not particularly keen on sport, he was a man of intellect, brains, thoughts, and the physical side of life—work in the garden and things like that—had very low priority. I remember him saying that his major contribution to work around the house was signing cheques. I hadn't heard him say much about sport and things like that although he did say he was a member of the Boy Scouts in Berlin in the late 1920s. Of course there was the Army, and there was skiing, and there was tennis. And in the skiing we used to go up in my car, which he rather critically referred to as that cheap German car—you know what car it was. But he relented and of course it always gave wonderful opportunities for those in the car—you were a captive audience—to discuss and to argue and to also talk to the children. My children too. His ability, his sense of fun of course, his jokes, we know them all, they still go around, about Elvis the Pelvis who had a brother[?]. His real interest in their problems is something that will stay with us always. On the tennis court he was, as Grisha always was, very clever. He was not a great player but he was quite strong at the net and he developed a little practice when you did something really clever (and I should remind you that I am the youngest member of our tennis club and we call ourselves the geriatric tennis club), but when somebody did something very good he'd say 'Pardon' like the French do and Grisha could do that with a wonderful varying degree of sincerity. If he really had tricked somebody he'd say 'Pardon'—that had become a standard pattern with us over the years. Quite some time ago Grisha had a double hip replacement and not so long ago he had major eye surgery. Never mind the hip replacement, he came back to the court and hit the ball as well as he could and the only concession after the eye operation was that he preferred to serve from the forhand court side because it was better for his eyesight. We shared wonderful times for which we and our family are very, very grateful. In thinking about him I could only quote the words of a hymn of thanksgiving 'Now thank we all our God, with heart, with hands, with voices, Who wondrous things has done, In whom His world rejoices'. I suggest that Grisha was one of these wondrous things in our life and that for the rest of our lives we will always rejoice in having known him.

**WILL DARVALL** Listening to Hans reminds me of one of Grisha's famous statements 'Any bloody fool can work; it takes brains to organise'. Our next speaker is Gus Nossal, long time friend and fellow refugee.

**GUS NOSSAL** Sklovskys all, dear colleagues and friends. My role in today's adventure is to attest to Grisha's high professional competence and to his unfailing support of research, development, innovation and progress. The context of my first professional contact with Grisha, over 35 years ago, is absolutely typical. It was when a close friend of mine, a prominent plant scientist, had just returned from Cambridge and was getting going at the Central Research Labs of ICI and, of course, who immediately became his mentor, his guide, his friend, but Grisha. That was how I saw Grisha and his work at ICI. The person was Martin Canny, as many of you will know, who had some excellent years at ICI and then went on to become the foundation professor of botany at Monash University and had a very distinguished scientific career.

Grisha was amongst the first people to realise that library science was about much more than books and journals. He was really amongst the very first to realise the huge impact that computers would have on the field. He was the first to realise that information technology was a separate, pristine science in its own right. He was extremely prominent in forging government policy in the '60s and '70s as this field took off. There was of course the famous Science and Technology Information Report, the so called STISEC report, which set the pattern for government policy in information technology especially interlibrary cooperation and the access of Australian libraries to the international databases which today of course we all take for granted. I had my second reasonably close professional contact with Grisha for three brief years during which the late Ken Myer asked me to join the National Library Council and the reason was that the National Library was getting much more interested in science and technology and indeed founded the National Science Library as part of the Library in Canberra. It didn't take long for Grisha to brief me on the fact that there was a certain rivalry between CSIRO, the NLA (National Library of Australia) and the Association of University Libraries as to who really had the primacy in information technology, and Grisha typically bent every energy on various committees and bodies and sub-

committees to ensure that somehow all of these forces worked together. Indeed that did happen and I'm happy to say that the situation at the present day between these major science libraries of the nation is very collegial indeed. If there have been any regrets, one of my great ones is that I never had the chance to talk to Grisha about the information super highway. I think I know what he would have said and my opinion on that is shaped by my third substantive professional contact with Grisha, when I asked him to do a brief but quite important consultancy, after his retirement, on the information systems within the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute. I can guess what Grisha might have thought about the information super highway. He would not have been overly concerned about the details of optical fibres in the network. He would not have spent a lot of time thinking about the computer hardware behind it. But he would have been very concerned about systems design and, above all, about the material that was to be transmitted, about the vehicles on the super highway. He was one for the strategic elements, the ideas behind a venture. The 'Big Picture'. This rich professional life, both before and after retirement from ICI, was honoured by the award of the Order of Australia to Grisha and he certainly would have been among the earlier non-Australian-born recipients of our National honour. This Australian honour our citizen of the world rightly and justly treasured.

May I close with just a couple of more personal reflections. What a partnership between Grisha, the man of science, the man of accuracy, the technical supremo in a most important but highly specialised field, and Celia, the painter, the creator of wonderful gardens, the artistic spirit whose high humanities-oriented intelligence we all admire so much. A truly wondrous complementation. Finally, whence came Grisha's rugged and courageous individualism? Over twenty years ago, Grisha and Celia visited Lyn and me while we were temporarily living in Paris and there were chances for some in depth conversations, perhaps somewhat longer conversations than in the normal Australian hurly burly, and it was here that we learnt some of the early experiences that we have been talking about earlier today which lead Grisha into a deep hatred of repressive regimes and terror-based curtailment of civil liberties. This freedom of the human spirit meant more to Grisha than almost anything else. Who among us has not benefited from this characteristic of our huge hearted, unquenchably positive and generous friend?

**WILL DARVALL** Mention of the Order of Australia reminds me of the story that Mike told at the cremation service two days ago. When clearing out Grisha's cupboard, they found each jacket had three pens and over half the jackets had been awarded the Order of Australia. Our next speaker is Phillip Law, Antarctic scientist, educationist and another one who shared a friendship with Grisha for more than 30 years.

**PHILLIP LAW** Thank you Bill. Ladies and Gentlemen, it's quite obvious what a remarkable person Grisha was. He combined high intelligence with dynamic mental energy and a penchant for getting things done. With his creative mind he was always looking for new things to do or for ways of improving old things, but above all he had a passion for friendship. He worked at maintaining friendships, something most of us are either too lazy or too careless to do. He knew more people than anyone I have ever met. Some 30-odd years ago Grisha organised a luncheon group, comprising professional associates from ICI and from outside the company. It met once a month. The club exists today as vigorous and lively as ever. Most such groups last a few years and then fade out, but Grisha held this group together with his enthusiasm and his organising skills. It constitutes a forum for intellectual discussion and camaraderie that is unique. It is up to us surviving members to ensure that, as a memorial to him, the Sklovsky lunches will continue on into the distant future. Grisha's concept of the high responsibilities that friendship entails led him to go out of his way to help people in a variety of situations. To a busy man, and Grisha was an exceptionally busy one, the most valuable commodity is time. Grisha was unsparingly generous in devoting time to anything that concerned his friends. He thought of ways of assisting them and their projects, their concerns, their welfare, whether or not they actually called for assistance. In a broader sense this attribute led to his deep sense of responsibility of service to the community. His Curriculum Vitae lists a multitude of institutions to which he contributed time and effort, but I wish to comment upon one in particular—the Royal Society of Victoria—for which he had a deep attachment.

But first I must mention his long and important successful political campaign to block off a highly undesirable development plan for Camberwell Junction. It is appropriate that we are meeting today in this venue. He became a

member of the Royal Society in 1963 and was elected to its Council in 1967. A new position of Development Manager was created and Grisha undertook the honorary duties of this position with zeal—working to build up membership and to devise ways of promoting the Society. In particular he worked to rejuvenate it, broadening the scope of its monthly lectures to appeal to members. In 1983 he became Vice-President and then was elected President, serving from 1985 to 1987. All in all he helped transform the Society from what was a rather stodgy, sluggish body into a vigorous and lively organisation.

I personally owe Grisha a debt of gratitude for having conceived the idea of holding a Society Symposium to celebrate my 80th birthday and for having carried it through successfully, complete with a published report of the proceedings. Grisha had a keen interest in Antarctic affairs, partly due to the fact that his brother-in-law, Jean, was the administrative officer of Expeditions Polaires Francaises, a French Polar organisation led by Paul-Emile Victor. Grisha visited the station 'Dumont d'Urville' in Antarctica on two summer relief voyages of the French expeditions. He acted as liaison officer in Australia for the years when these expeditions used to leave from Melbourne. And when an Antarctic Treaty consultative meeting was later held in Canberra, Grisha took on the job of English/French interpreter at the Treaty. My friendship with Grisha goes back well over 30 years. I and his numerous friends mourn his passing deeply but remember with affection his warm, generous, outgoing personality and his considerable contributions to the Melbourne society.

**WILL DARVALL** Our next speaker is Liz Taylor—physician, scientist and family friend, who will speak on behalf of the Taylor family.

**LIZ TAYLOR** Grisha Sklovsky was an educated man. He loved education, being educated, and educating. He never questioned if one should be educated and Celia explained that he loved an educated woman. When the Sklovsky family asked me to speak as a token educated woman my humility took a dive. I knew how many here would be educated and I felt quite flattered. Then swift and direct as Grisha could be, Michael Sklovsky quickly reminded us that Grisha loved a bimbo too. Stevie, Daniel, William and Daisy—Grisha and Celia's beloved grandchildren—I wonder if they remember again

that Grisha used to play with my children and that they loved it when Grisha would ask 'What colour is this?' 'Red' the children would call it. 'No' Grisha would say, his eyes twinkling, his smile broadening, and the children laughing, Grisha would say 'It's green'. Why was this so amusing? One possible explanation was that it was so incongruous that Grisha, so rock solid, so reliable, didn't know something as fundamental as his colours. Grisha was rock solid, reliable, almost infallible, in his relationships with his family and friends particularly. Consider a phone call when Grisha answered 'Sklovsky'. 'Oh dear' you thought, 'I've interrupted in the middle of something important'. 'Hello Grisha this is Liz.' 'Hello Liz.' It sounded like he had been waiting for you to call all day. Then he would give you a piece of information, a story, remind you of a relevant piece of music or TV programme, or share a family incident, or something of his very precious Celia—something that he'd been saving just for you until the moment you called. Then you realise that that D flat 'Sklovsky' was because he had been waiting for you to call and he hadn't been able to share with you his particular gift earlier. He was there if you needed advice. Someone you could refer a particular problem to or who could help you with information that you required. Always waiting to help, to inform, or to educate. Rock solid and entirely reliable, his concern for us all was all encompassing. Equally his enthusiasm for his various works was all encompassing. He was always educated in the areas in which he was involved. He always seemed to know such a lot and he loved to know things. Celia told me a story last Sunday of an incident that occurred early in their relationship. Grisha had come to the house where she was staying and he and his friends sat down to discuss French literature and other things in French. Celia was feeling rather lost and left out. This was a long time ago. She went out to the kitchen and confided in her hostess that she felt uneducated and uneasy in this place of educated people and to her horror her hostess relayed this to Grisha, who'd appeared at the door with, quote, 'his funny round face and quaint clothes'. On hearing this Grisha started to laugh. 'That's wonderful' he said. 'We've been talking about these things for so long but we've never been able to impress anybody before.' How then could he not be here? Is this like the colour game, incongruous to our fundamental concept that Grisha is always there? I don't think so. Grisha has spent his life educating us



about his passions. He's laid a rock solid foundation for us. We can act as the bricks and the mortar, to build on that foundation and continue to build the edifices of his works. His most recent passion was the work of the Institute of Reproduction and Development at Monash. Again Grisha was able to see the extent and ingenuity of science being carried on in this Institute. He was becoming quite well educated in the variety of biosciences conducted there. His passion for the work of the scientists in the Institute can be built upon. It's most fitting that a research scholarship in the Institute of Reproduction and Development will be set up in Grisha's name to continue his tradition of educating. However, there will be continued and less tangible ways to build on Grisha's educational foundation. We will continue to be his all encompassing friends and he will continue to be our all encompassing friend and rock solid foundation.

**WILL DARVALL** Our next speaker is Zelman Cowan who, like everybody else, shared a warm friendship with Grisha for a long time.

**ZELMAN COWAN** Friends, at the beginning of each year a new wall chart is placed in my office and it marks appointments, speeches and commitments. As in earlier years, the chart for this year, 1995, has eleven red stickers bearing the words 'luncheon club'. The first date for this year is 7th February. I had anticipated that on that day Grisha would call for me at my office in Treasury Place. That we would drive to the Hotel in North Melbourne, talking all the way. That we would have an excellent lunch with talk ranging with the club members over many topics, whereafter Grisha, who managed the whole thing, would drive me back, both of us talking all the way, to Treasury Place. That, as I tell you, is scheduled for 7th February. No doubt that lunch will still take place on that day but there will be no Grisha. How things will develop no one of us yet knows. It's hard to see it without him, without the imprint of his style, his zest and his enthusiasm. Also a sign to an early date in this year is a visit to CSIRO, concerned incidentally with the information super highway, in company with Grisha. I suppose all we can say is that we work and plan on the assumption that life goes on forever. I don't recall where or when it was that I first met him. It was some time in my Melbourne days when I was at the University of Melbourne. That was between 1951 and 1966, so that there

is a wide margin for error, and in those years he was with ICI. It must have been at some time in this period that I joined the luncheon club. Then in 1966 we went away from Melbourne and I did not permanently return, we did not permanently return, until August 1990. In the years away I remained on the occasional list of the lunch club members and, typically, a list of dates came to me wherever I was each year. I came on occasions when dates coincided with time in Melbourne. Then, not long after our return to Melbourne in August 1990 to settle, we came to Grisha's 75th birthday celebration. It was an enormous and a lively party and I remember the long rhyming count, a count of Grisha's life and style, which was recited with great gusto amid roars of laughter and appreciation. That great party really gave me some picture of the range of Grisha's friendships, of his interests and of his activities. And it set the course for the shared years of life that we were to enjoy together. And it happens oddly, but perhaps aptly, that we last met and talked on my 75th birthday party late last year. We had shared interests in the Institute for International Affairs, though in later years he spoke to me of his concerns about it and, after a very busy and long involvement in its management and administration in Melbourne, he was talking about some reduction of his activities in it. His long enduring interest in the Institute was a reflection of his lively concern with international affairs and relations. He was born into pre-revolutionary Russia and he lived to see the Soviet Union disappear. In its wake there are many things occurring in various parts of the world which he and I, from a generally shared perspective, did not much like. The disappearance of the Soviet Union certainly has not heralded a glad confident warming.

Those of us who have known him, the many, many of them, are all aware of his extraordinary network of friendships and that's been remarked again and again today. He worked at those friendships and acted upon the admonition of Dr Samuel Johnston, that friendship should be worked at, should be kept in constant repair. Sometimes I have to say at least once 'I resisted'. I remember how, not long after my return to Melbourne, he sought to recruit me to his tennis group. For some reason I resisted and procrastinated. He must have come at it a dozen or twenty times. I'm not sure why I didn't obey. Not having played for some years it may be that I was feeble

enough not to want to take up the challenge and the test of starting again. And then, as has been said, in recent years he became involved as chairman of the management advisory board of the Institute of Reproduction and Development of Monash. He drew me in as a patron of the Institute. As a lawyer I've had a long concern with a number of the matters which concern it. One of the last things we talked about was support for the Institute. He was enthusiastic about its work and its purposes and proud of his association with it. I suppose the point comes back very clearly, he was a great enthusiast and this masked the fact that he was after all nearly 80 years old. It is good that our memories of him are of a man at the top of his formidable form. When I spoke to Celia on hearing of his death I said that I felt bad. She queried the words and perhaps I expressed myself in an unsatisfactory way. What I meant was that I was deeply saddened, disturbed by this sudden loss of a friendship which gave me and those who shared it great comfort, that his death has left a void which will not easily be filled. Like many who are here today I am grateful that our lives touched as they did. He had, as I say again, a genius for friendship as many of us know and I am very glad to have been a beneficiary.

**WILL DARVALL** Our second last speaker is David Dekretser, Director of the Institute of Reproduction and Development at Monash.

**DAVID DEKRETSER** Thank you Celia and family for giving me the honour to participate in this ceremony. I've only come to know Grisha over his latter years, really since 1992, when I first met him in his role on the advisory board of the Centre for Early Human Development, something that, through the friendship of Michael and Alan Trounson, Grisha was recruited to. And when I first met him I wondered who was this unusual man and the more I learnt it was borne out, he was a truly unusual man. And as I got to know him more and more it became evident that he was in fact the person to be the inaugural chairman of the Institute's advisory board which was set up in 1993. This was a very important role, as we pulled together several successful but independent research groups to form an Institute, as we sought to develop its structure, its public image and to establish its niche in a very competitive research arena in Melbourne. Grisha loved the challenge. It was very obvious as the time went by that we had

made a wise choice. He was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Institute. He was inquisitive, always seeking information. Seeking to understand the complex relationships between the Institute, the Faculty, the University and the hospital—quite a lot to get together. And he provided us with very wise counsel in developing the structures in the formative phases of the Institute. And he had a great sense of humour as everybody has mentioned. A quip or a comment was just absolutely right. And on one occasion, when we'd finalised this giant structure of relationships between the board and the University, a cartoon arrived on my desk from Grisha depicting a pyramidal structure of individuals with the caption 'So now we're organised, what do we do?' And on another occasion after some very, very frustrating delays with the bureaucracy within the University which was causing us quite a lot of despair, another cartoon arrived. This time it was a picture of a heron, and you may well have seen this, with the head of a frog in the mouth of the heron, with the arms of the frog grasping at the throat of the heron, with the title 'Never give up'. A comment really which personified his approach to many things. He continually joined in the activities of the Institute. He was keen, as Liz has indicated, to understand the scientific work and he came to know many of us very well, members of the staff and the advisory board. And he sought every opportunity to promote the Institute to you, his very wide circle of friends. He created opportunities for our scientific staff to talk at public meetings and in fact he had planned a meeting, which I hope will go ahead, with the Royal Society of Victoria later this year in March, to enable us to talk about the issues of reproductive medicine which impinge on our society. He introduced us to many influential friends. He was to us the information super highway, from that point of view, as he sought funds for the Institute. And I hope you will forgive him for what he has done to you in pestering you about the Institute in the hope of involving you in its future development. The Institute really has been very fortunate to have such a man as its inaugural advisory board chairman and his influence will be greatly missed. To recognise his contributions to the Institute, as Liz has indicated, we hope to provide a post-graduate scholarship called the 'Grisha Sklovsky Scholarship'. I think such an award would embody Grisha's interest in young people and the provision of funds to enable post-graduate

students to continue their intellectual development would certainly be in keeping with his philosophy. On a personal note, it has been fortunate to get to know him well in many delightful discussions that we had, often on the weekend, often over a glass of whisky, often after a game of tennis, and as I learnt more and more about him it's been wonderful to piece it all together today. I learnt how he dealt with the adversity of his visual problems and his hips. And he was eternally grateful to the medical developments which permitted him to enjoy his weekly tennis forays, they were indeed a highlight. And he continued his interest in the Institute really right up to his death because on the Monday we were to meet for lunch with Sam Lipsky and I'm sure that Sam knows it would've been a lobbying session with regard to the Institute. Both he and Celia were welcoming hosts and it was interesting, when I first met Celia, I thought 'I know her from somewhere'. Yet I hadn't met her. Then it came together because, of course, Celia is Barbara's sister and Barbara I had known in younger days 'cause Bill and I shared our time together in doing medicine and many other fond memories. It was very obvious that his family was important to him. He was unashamedly proud of the achievements of his children and his wider family and in this sense we at the Institute felt some of his pride in our achievements. It was indeed an honour and a pleasure to have known the scholar and gentleman.

**WILL DARVALL** Our final speaker is my brother Peter Darvall, nephew, protege and Claytons poet.

**PETER DARVALL** In 1938 a charming young Australian woman was in Europe and she went to the Cinema in Lyon. At interval she decided she needed a cigarette and required a light. An alert young man with thick greasy hair, a loud suit and thick spectacles was alert to her needs. Last week, in 1995, a delightful and exotic old gentleman wearing handsome blue pyjamas and carrying a bag of salami and smelly cheeses and, most of all, telling jokes, appeared at a place which they tell us has Pearly Gates. In 57 years, in those 57 years, he enriched and added value to all of our lives. In the first 10 of those only Celia was the occasional beneficiary but, in the remaining 47, we have all been privileged. He was, as you have learned and as you know very well, both interesting

and interested, delightful, and most of all took delight in everything and delight, I think, is the word that most sums Grisha up. One thing we've all learnt from him is to take enormous pleasure in little things. We can all remember the way he would shake with mirth at a quip and how he would laugh uproariously at his own jokes. The delight in waiting for Grisha's first joke at a Christmas party. The delight he took in all little children. The delight that most recently he experienced at Musica Viva when at interval he went up to his old friends and, quivering with excitement, almost bouncing, said 'Don't you notice anything different about me?' He couldn't wait to tell them that for the first time in his whole life he was not wearing glasses. If life is a party then Grisha was the life of that party and I am the nefarious poet referred to earlier by Sir Zelman. I won't burden you with the whole of it but I'd like to read some bits of it because it is about the party theme, it's entitled 'The Party Boy'. Copies of this poem will be available at Celia's later. In that poem I listed the Culture Party, the Party Lunch, the Camping Party, the Christmas Party, the Party Politic—and you know how much enjoyment he took out of even those politicians that were entirely opposed to his own views—The Prospect Hill Party, the SBS Party, the ICI Party, the Tennis Party, in short 'Life's a Party'. There are a couple of allusions in this poem, the Ron that is referred to is Ron Taft, the Pip that is referred to is my eldest son, and the gardening that is referred to is something that Grisha tried once and decided that he didn't like. Extracts from a poem entitled 'The Party Boy'.

Our Grisha is gregarious enjoying parties  
various  
I'd like to take a little time recalling some  
in halting rhyme  
I know that you'll admit that we have all  
had jolly times with G  
I'll make a low key gentle start and mention  
first the culture part  
Or party should I rightly say since Grisha  
knows no other way  
Yes everywhere that Grisha goes it seems  
that everyone he knows  
'Good God there's X' he'll likely say at  
interval of some new play  
'We shared a lunch in '43 I'm sure that he'll  
remember me'  
And that he does who could forget none  
of us has ever yet found someone that  
he hasn't met

Often he's been known to snore at concerts  
 in preparation for the hectic round all  
 through the break when he must be most  
 wide awake  
 To swap some jokes and see his mates and  
 check on all his luncheon dates  
 The party lunch I must report the endless  
 quest for a better sort  
 Grisha bent on discovery of new locations  
 culinary  
 When Grisha's cronies all arrive a struggling  
 bistro comes alive  
 Or hotels off the beaten track with Osso  
 Bucco out the back  
 I must record a special trip when Grisha  
 with his first new hip  
 Leapt out of bed to lunch with Ron and  
 promptly slipped and fell upon the mossy  
 step and with a crunch invented thus the  
 one hip lunch  
 On summer and the seaside camp, Grisha  
 put the party stamp  
 If you want to laugh then you should seek  
 my Uncle G at the Wild Dog Creek  
 There's many who could truly tell camp  
 vinex yes I knew it well  
 Black plastic tied with bits of string vinex  
 for most everything  
 Mats and covers, flaps and sheets, table-  
 cloths and flimsy seats  
 Tattered canvas and other such given a  
 cultured modern touch  
 Though some would view him with a smile,  
 his plastic sandals set the style  
 Bronzed surfie G on his rubber mat or by  
 the pools in his goggles sat  
 Checking out the latest news and sharing  
 wide his well formed views  
 Things were not as they might seem that  
 so-called camping had a theme  
 If to dull life some style you bring anyone  
 can be a king  
 Smelly cheese was Grisha's way to keep the  
 blowies well at bay  
 The mozzies despite their fierce attack  
 couldn't pierce his hairy back  
 With fish and chips some crayfish cook  
 improve the beach with the best new  
 book  
 Raining the vinex will keep us fine with  
 salami, tongue and good red wine  
 By Wild Dog Farm a bumpy court, a tennis  
 of a different sort  
 Cheating, tricks and sleights of hand,  
 cackling from his merry band  
 Once little Pip was quite amazed when

from the creek his line was raised  
 On which he'd caught a big red carp those  
 in the plot or who were sharp knew that  
 the creek was far too small to have this  
 ocean fish at all  
 Under the bank that noise was G shaking  
 with his usual glee  
 We recognised the fish all right, he'd  
 bought it in the town last night  
 The parties at old Prospect Hill have  
 famous been and famous still  
 The garden flowering with his art Celia  
 plays a minor part  
 Green fingers G just simply loves to slip  
 into his gardening gloves and spend a  
 day with birds and bees, 'Hello flowers  
 and hello trees' but best he likes the  
 lurching bit, so for an hour or four he'll  
 sit to shameless chat and laugh and shirk  
 while Celia does the heavy work  
 As handyman and builder too Grisha's  
 skills are known to you  
 He often will philosophise it takes brains  
 to organise adding then with awful smirk  
 any bloody fool can work  
 Grisha has a concept neat everything  
 should be a treat  
 Life's a party, he hates to miss the news in  
 full pursuit of this he listens to all times  
 of day, here or there or on the way  
 At dawn he nearly jumps for joy at the  
 rustling sound of the paper boy  
 The sayings of old chairman G often seem  
 astute to me  
 He has been wrong I will admit but we  
 would never dwell on it  
 I'd better stop this complex tale to tell it  
 all I'm sure to fail  
 Anyhow you get the gist many party types  
 I've missed  
 Suffice to say from you and me we'll miss  
 the party loving G.

I want to hark back to that delight. Of course  
 we're sad that he has gone and we will miss  
 sharing that delight with him, but that delight  
 has been promulgated, I know, in my own life  
 and I know the lives of so many others. We've  
 been very lucky and, Celia, thank you for being  
 so absolutely brilliant in 1938.

WILL DARVALL Celia and many others are  
 naturally thinking about the possibility of a  
 biography and any expressions of interest along  
 those lines please direct them towards Celia.  
 Wild horses and broken legs would not have

stopped Grisha attending this incredible celebration for he would have loved the recognition. But the family and I know that there's one thing

that would've gladdened his heart right now. Let's have three cheers for Grisha. That is the end of our proceedings.